

Strangers *No More*

Anthropological Studies
of Cat Island, the Bahamas

Report of an Ethnographic Research Project

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EDITED BY

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Preface:

This essay was written by Jonathan Levey (BSW, McGill University 1986, and BS, Ithaca College, 1979). It describes Life in Bramley, on Cat Island, in the Bahamas. It is a composite of several weeks of observation and condenses both time and individual activities to depict a typical day in the village (circa 1977-1978). All names, including Bramley, are pseudonyms. It includes several of the author's corresponding photos.

This essay is an excerpt (pp. 44-55) from the Ithaca College publication, "Strangers No More," edited by Professor Joel S. Savishinsky and comprised of a series of related essays based on fieldwork by anthropology students carried out by 12 students during an intensive 30 day period on Cat Island under the mentorship of Professor Joel S. Savishinsky. It is with Professor Savishinsky's permission that this essay, A Day in the Life of Bramley, has been posted in digital format for online/worldwide access.

It is also worthwhile to note that "A Day in the Life of Bramley," was re-printed in the publication, "Modern Bahamian Society," edited by Dean W. Collinwood and Steve Dodge (Caribbean Books, 1989, pp. 157-171).

It is the hope of the author, Jonathan Levey, that those individuals who have grown up on the Out-Islands in the Bahamas, may truly enjoy and appreciate reading about and envisioning the way of life that their parents and grandparents lived -- and (perhaps) themselves, during the time-period in which this piece was written. As well, future generations with roots in the Out-Island areas, may also one day derive pleasure and insights from this essay.





A DAY IN THE LIFE OF BRAMLEY

by

Jonathan Levey

I have decided to begin my field day early. By my watch it is five a.m., but the darkness is deceptive and my eyes say midnight. All but the moon and the stars are asleep. I walk along the loosely-paved road into Bramley. The breeze is warm and blanketing. Spaced out along the roadside are chalk-like mounds of limestone. They glow a purple-white. The moon is my flashlight and guides me towards the town's entrance. I hear fully the noises hidden in the bush. Echoes of silence loudly interrupt chorusing crickets, each there without the other. As I round the bend and saunter softly past the town's first house, my eyes catch sight of sunrise. The bluish-black of early morning brightens, while soft pastels brush gently across the papery sky. Yellow-golds melt into pinkish-reds. And all along the sounds of the sea grow stronger, drumming out its rhythmic meeting with the reefs.

* * *

These are some of my perceptions as I wander into Bramley. To get a real feeling of daily life within this town, I find a vantage spot at which to sit.

I am sitting near the wall of the old, abandoned Catholic church at the center of Bramley (Cf. Map 3). It is a place where my view of the community encounters the fewest obstructions. It is a good spot from which to begin. I can observe, interact or move to a different location as needed. In front of me curves the town's only road. On either side of this road are two homesteads. Before me and to my right are the other homes of Bramley.

The ground is flat, the grass is short. Footsize islands of slabbish rock are scattered at random. Trees stand alone, each house usually having one nearby. A yellow-green palm at the Bennetts, a mushrooming greentop on the way to the Manleys. Green bush is shoulder height and grows thickly along the roadside and behind the houses. This causes the town to appear encircled in a fringe of vegetation.

* * *

It is 5:30 a.m., and the only movement is the Whateley's brown horse as he looks for a patch of fresh grass to chew.

By 6 a.m., the town's first voice blurts loudly from the inside of Norbert Bennett's household. It is answered by a lengthy and muffled reply. Just then a repetitive clacking sound comes from over at the Whateley's. Jonathon, age 14, and his 21-year-old sister, Mary, are inside their small kitchen hut. They are preparing breakfast for their family. Laying and lighting the sticks of wood, they work in silence. Jonathon cooks the fish while Mary makes the grits. Their brothers, 12-year-old Enoch and 11-year-old Harmon, emerge from the main house. Enoch seats himself quietly inside the warm kitchen hut. Harmon sleepily walks past them towards the wooden grey outhouse.

6:20 and the entire town is awake. Down the road Doris Burton, aged 37, leaves her house and crosses the road to visit her sister, Constance Bennett. As they drink their morning cup of tea, they talk quietly about weeding the Trade Winds Club airstrip, the job they have been working on over the past week. Doris lights her pipe, "We gotty get going," she says as her sister puts on her plaited hat with the dark green band. Constance adjusts her bag about her shoulder and the two women cross the thin road. Doris calls for her daughter, "Flora, bring my bag and cutlass!"

It is 6:30 as Doris and Constance wave to a woman walking towards them down the road. It is their friend and sister, Corina Rackham. Wrapped about her head is a pink turban, while between her lips a short black pipe puffs. Corina joins her two sisters and they leave to work on the airstrip. As they pass the Whateley's yard they exchange waves of good morning. Down the road they walk, out of town, talking about their children, their health, and predictions of the day's weather.

It is 6:45 and Mr. Edward Dempster is on his way to work. He is a dark-skinned man of 57, wearing navy-blue clothes and a matching golf cap atop his greying hair; he walks briskly along the road. Stopping in the middle of the road, he greets a group of teenage girls on their way back from the well. A pail of water is balanced atop each of their heads. With one hand raised to grip the rim, the girls stand around him. "Good morning!", he says with a swelling smile. He waves good day and continues his walk out of town. He'll spend the day as caretaker of a nearby club.

7:00 and over at the Bennett's house, Norbert is chasing his seven-year-old son for misbehaving. Alfred outruns his father, ducking into the

bush just ahead of flying rocks thrown by the angered man. Norbert, still upset, shouts out a jumble of curse words, then walks slowly back to his kitchen hut, where he resumes his plaiting. Inside, his sixteen-year-old son, Lucas, tends the fire. Wandering just outside the thatched hut are Norbert's two daughters--Julie, 8, and Pamela, 2. Pamela's tiny fingers grasp the hem of her older sister's multicolored dress. Leaning against the hut's side, Julie looks down at little Pamela and begins playing with the plaits in her sister's hair. Inside the hut, a transistor radio sings out music from Nassau.

Noah, the husband of Corina Rackham, peers into Norbert's hut. Norbert looks up as Noah enters with morning greetings. Outside, Franklin, age 14, and his five-year-old brother, Robert, are boisterously arguing over a game of marbles. Norbert yells out, "Quiet you two or you'll have the switch!!" Robert walks away crying and sits on the house's front steps. Head looped between his knees, he continues to cry. Franklin laughs and returns to the marbles for a game of solitaire. Norbert and Noah walk out towards the main road. Each has a basket over his shoulder. They are going out to the fields to pick pigeon peas for supper and storage. As they pass the Whateley's house, Enoch runs over to meet them. "My daddy says I can stay home from school and help in the fields." The three walk on.

It is 7:30 and Mr. Whateley, a rugged man of seventy-five, gently leans against the outside wall of his storage hut. Leisurely, he packs and lights his pipe. Then he opens an old jackknife and begins to scrape his work pants clean. He uses this time to think about the repair work that is needed on the kitchen's roof and walls. He intends to work well into the afternoon.

Under the dilly tree at the Manleys, Bethena sits mending burlap sacks. She is the wife of Reverend Josiah Manley. As she sews the worn holes, she softly sings the words of a gospel song. Bethena will be taking the bags into the fields to hold the corn. Her singing is interrupted by the rustling of leaves as her two oldest sons emerge from the bush and into the yard. Peter, age 20, and Amos, age 15, have returned from tending their seventeen goats. They spent the last forty-five minutes moving the goats to a fresher feeding ground. Amos calls out to Bethena, "Mommy, three of the larger goats have jumped over the fence again." Bethena tells him they'll be back by evening, "just like the last time." She tells Amos to stay home from school today: "I need your help in the fields." Peter announces to his mother that he and Lucas Bennett will be doing some diving this morning. He checks his speargun, making sure that the spearhead is tightly fastened. Next, he gathers his fins, mask and snorkle, then an extra gun for Lucas. Lucas enters the yard, greeting everyone with a small waving gesture and a quiet nod of his head. As the two leave the yard Bethena calls after them, "Peter, bring home a grouper fish for grandmommy and some conch for our supper." Peter nods and says, "that old grouper will be this big." To show the size he stretches out his left arm. Then he places the edge of his right palm over his wrist and moves it up along his arm, stopping just before the shoulder. Grinning he says, "I put him right in the deep freeze!" Bethena



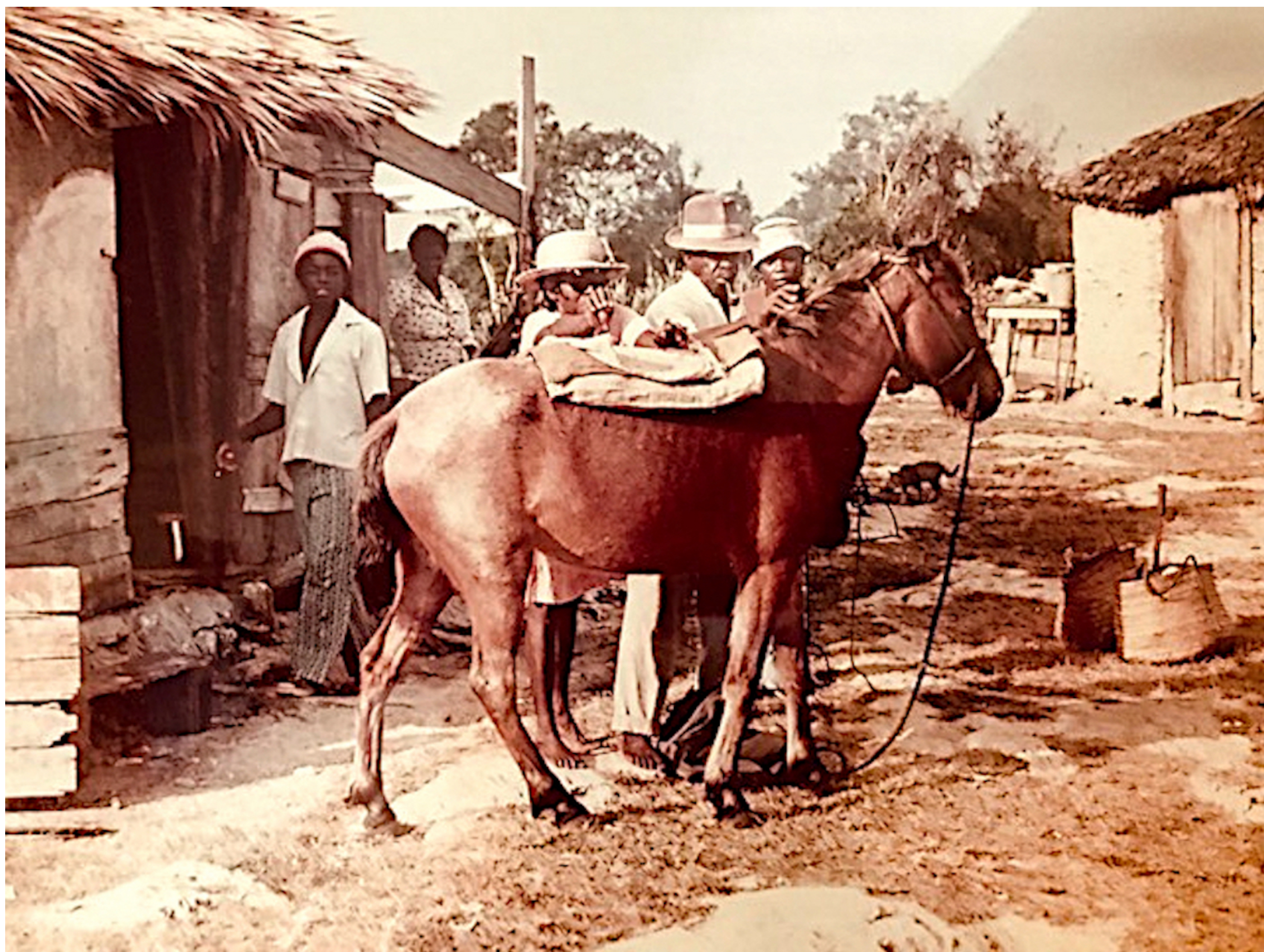
smiles and the two friends walk off towards the footpath that leads down to the beach and their boat.

By now it is 7:50, and the high school age children are ready for school. A few have walked over to the Whateleys, joined by some of their younger brothers and sisters; there they wait for the bus to arrive. Others have wandered over to Norbert's yard. Both houses are near the roadside. A couple of boys have been shooting marbles, two others play catch, a girl joins in.

It is eight a.m.; around the bend beeps the horn of the blue and white van. The driver, Louis Timmons, stops just outside the Whateley's house. By the time the older children have reached the bus, Louis has stepped out and is holding the door open. The children climb into the bus' rear seats. Louis drives the vehicle another thirty yards down the road, where the pavement begins to turn out of town. He beeps twice more. Franklin and James Bennett sprint to meet the bus. Becky Manley, age eighteen, walks slowly in the morning sun. She is wearing a dark blue dress and light blue shirt--the high school uniform. As the bus pulls away, the younger children left behind wave goodbye. After dropping the children off at the high school in Three Rock Bay, Louis will be back in an hour to drive the younger children to the primary school in Thrasher Creek. Meanwhile, the remaining children return to the houses nearest the roadside. Some share a book with an older friend or sibling, others color in their coloring books; a couple play jacks, using a rubber ball and pieces of white stone. They are waiting for Louis to return.

8:15, Mrs. Sara Dempster, a woman of forty-seven years, walks down the road with a large basket atop her head. At her knees trails her granddaughter, Joyce. She is four years old, and today will be her first day in the fields. They stop by the Whateley's house to talk with Jonathon's mother, Alberta. She is wearing her plaited hat and green sunglasses. There is a swab of cotton over her left eye. Sara Dempster asks her what is wrong, and Alberta replies: "I get it caught by one of the branches in my field." She pulls the cotton away revealing the reddened eye, stressing that it hurts most from the glare white of the sun. "But the glasses help," she continues. Sara shakes her head in empathy, saying, "You take care of it," as she and Joyce leave for the field.

It is 8:25 as Bethena Manley and her son Amos leave for the fields. Alberta sees them in the distance as they walk towards her house, mended bags in hand. She waves. Yesterday Bethena had asked her for the use of their horse, Tamarind. Alberta sets two huge baskets beside the storage hut while Mr. Whateley unties the horse and walks him to a spot beside the baskets. Whenever Tamarind is readied for the field, it becomes a town event. He is a wild horse. To get baskets and a rider on his back without being kicked or bitten is not easy. Mr. Whateley grips the rope tightly as Alberta attempts to secure the baskets on Tamarind's back. The horse shuffles nervously, then whinnies, scaring the few children that have gathered around. Now that the baskets are on, all that is left is for the rider to mount.

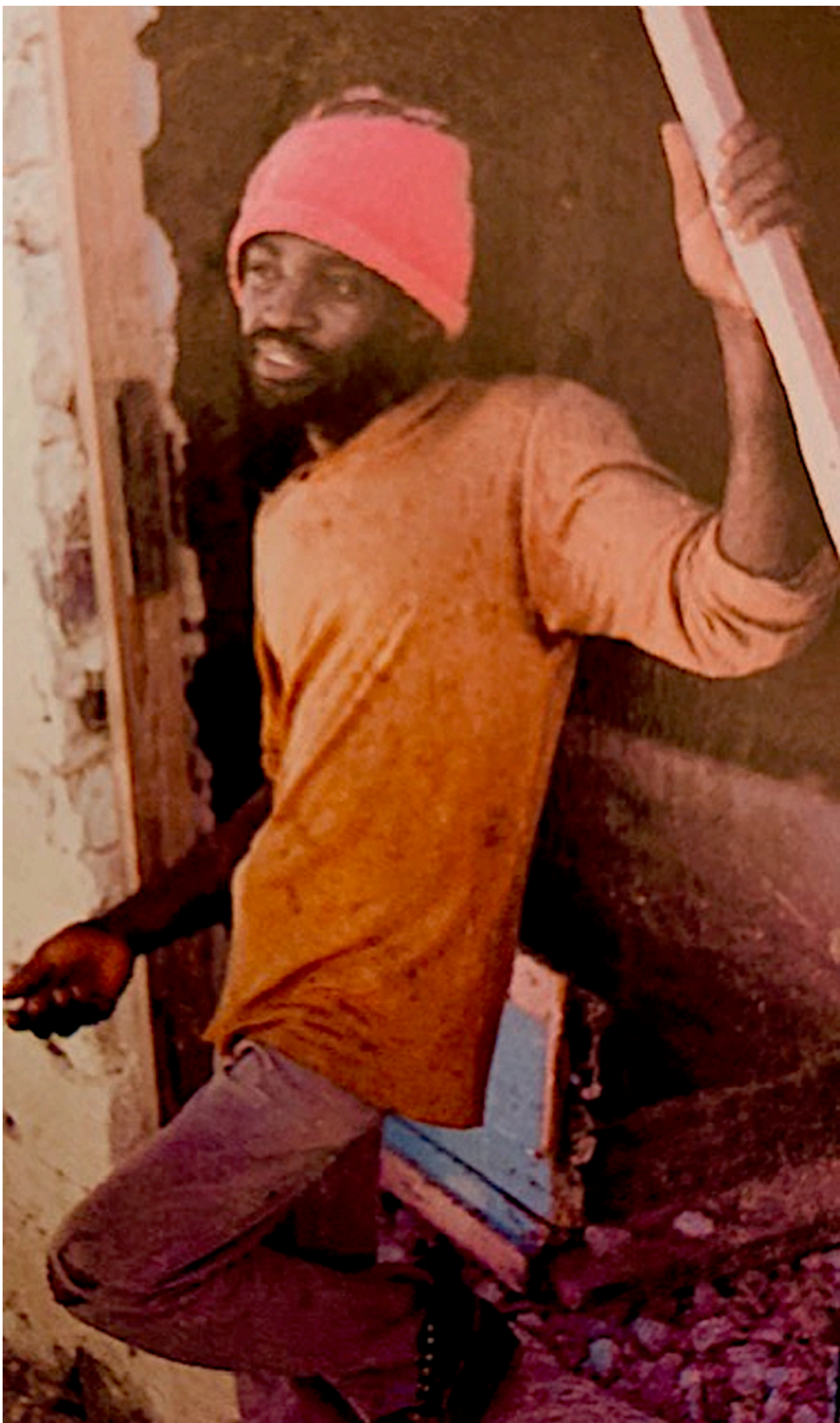


By the time Bethena and Amos reach the horse, there is a crowd of about fourteen people, young and old, anxiously watching. Bethena whispers for Amos to get on. "Go on, Amos," a few others prod. Sounds of muted laughter are heard from the children as the teenage boy cautiously walks up to the horse's side. He tries to jump on, but Tamarind pulls angrily away. After repeated attempts, and much laughter from the crowd, Amos walks the horse to a nearby bench, and this time leaps firmly onto Tamarind's back. The guffaws of the onlookers change to grinning jubilation. As Amos, triumphant, smiles with relief, the crowd breaks into claps and cheers. Amos then steers the horse alongside his mother and they start down the road out of town. Almost out of sight, Bethena hears her name being called. She runs back up the road to the Whateley's. A child holds up the radio she forgot. Bethena takes it and runs back up the road to join Amos. As they continue, Amos is told by Bethena that his father, Reverend Josiah, left for the Dolphin's Cay Club to finish a construction job with his men. Mother and son turn left onto a road that will take them to their field. They will spend all morning breaking corn from stalk.

Nine a.m., and the bus has returned to pick up the rest of the school children. Stopping at the Whateley's, Robert and Ruth are the first to reach it. Louis Timmons leans out his open window, and giving Ruth a head of cabbage from his garden, says: "Give this to your mother, be quick child." The nine-year-old girl races to the front steps of her house and gives Alberta the vegetable. Smiling, Alberta waves to Louis. By the time Ruth returns to the bus, her brother Harmon and the other children have already loaded on. Louis drives the bus the thirty yards to the next stop and beeps. Only four children get in: Paul Bennett, Randolph, Daniel Manley, and his little sister Esther. Daniel informs Louis that his brother Isaiah is sick with the measles and won't be going to school. Paul follows up, explaining that Julie Bennett is remaining at home too. "She is taking care of her little sister while her mommy works on the airstrip." Louis nods, and the bus drives off in the direction of the Thrasher Creek Primary School.

It is 9:20 and Lucille Bennett tells two of her children that she is going off to look for silvertop leaves. The leaves are located in an area of bush near Thrasher Creek, about four miles down the road. As she leaves the young children, she repeats her instructions to them: "Now remember, I want you two not to roam about, stay put and play, and be sure watch the house from strangers." When Lucille returns she will begin plaiting a new basket to carry pigeon peas in from the fields.

9:30 a.m. A bar is under construction about 150 yards from the Whateley's main house. The builder is Virgil, Alberta's 27-year-old son. He began construction about one year ago and has been building it piece-meal since then. Every few months he has been commuting to and from Nassau by mailboat. He returns from each trip with new materials. Wearing his pink woolen cap, Virgil climbs up the ladder to the top of the one-story structure. He begins laying down the rippled aluminum roof. The



sun is hot in the clear blue sky.

By 10 a.m., a large round basin at the Whateley's has been filled with salt water. Behind the Whateley's storage hut, Helen and her sister Mary begin washing the family's clothes. With strong steady strokes, the soiled wet clothes are rubbed clean against the ripples of the wooden washboard. A black speckled hen struts between Helen's feet, trailed by three of her chirping chicks. A large feathered rooster falls from the air and, as if jealous with anger, begins to chase the mother hen about the entire yard.

Alberta is seated a few yards away from her daughters. As they wash the clothes, Alberta sews a long strand of plait into the shape of a bag. At her side stands her daughter Naomi's two-year-old daughter, Matilda. The young girl's hair is symmetrically plaited with several a score of red, yellow, and blue rubber bands. She is practicing her plaiting, trying to continue the pattern of an old strand left abandoned by her grandmother.

Eleven a.m. comes quickly, and Mrs. Sara Dempster and Joyce have returned from the fields. Inside her kitchen hut, Sara begins to make tomato paste. She sets a mesh crate over an empty pail. Then, using vigorous hand motions, she squeezes and scrapes the plump red tomatoes back and forth against the mesh top. The juice begins to drip down into the pail below. She will spend the next few hours squeezing the basket of tomatoes and filling one or more pails with the juice. A few feet outside the hut, Joyce plays with several turquoise floor tiles cut into the shape of playing cards. She clacks each card against a slab of rock, stacking them up and knocking them down; she repeats the game. She quickly tires and picks up an old story book from inside the house. She returns to her spot by the rock and begins to slowly leaf through the pages. The book is a song book filled with musical notes. Joyce, too young to read words or notes, quietly begins singing a tune.

By 12:00 Lucille Bennett has returned, her worn basket filled with enough fresh silvertop to weave a new basket. She sits on a bench beside her house and begins anll or 15 string weave. With great skill, her fingers work the seemingly complex pattern. Over, under, dip through once. She easily works up to a rapid rhythm. Finished with the first set of strands, she sweeps the next strip out from between her lips and continues to insert them where the others left off. She will plait well into the afternoon. A few feet from her side, her two grandchildren are involved in a game of fire engines. One rolls the miniature red truck up to a small dirt mound built by his brother. Sounds of engines sputter from their mouths.

Wearing a loosely-knit woolen hat, Andrew--age twenty--meanders into Norbert Bennett's homestead. He is looking for Lucas. Julie Bennett tells him that he and Peter Manley have gone fishing. Andrew decides to go to the Buccaneer Club, a bar just outside of the town. He'll play some

dominoes and drink until Lucas returns from the sea.

It is 12:30, and except for the rhythmic banging of hammer against metal at Virgil's bar or an occasional flapping from a cackling rooster, the town seems almost empty. The villagers are out fishing, in the fields, working on an out-of-town construction job, or quietly moving about their household.

Mrs. Madelaine Manley, the eighty-year-old mother of Reverend Josiah Manley, slowly walks outside her house. She walks barefoot, her knees wrinkled with age. She is visiting her niece, Sara Dempster. Having finished squeezing the last few tomatoes, Sara calls her inside the hut. Within fifteen minutes the smell of freshly brewed coffee permeates the air. The two women are preparing a light lunch.

After slicing some freshly baked cornbread and pouring the coffee, Mrs. Dempster and Madelaine sit on the stoop. Between sips and slices, they talk. Each speaks about the other's health; they exchange the news concerning their relatives and neighbors. Sara starts: "Doris Burton fell out [fainted] yesterday while working on the airstrip. The nurse said for her to be easy with herself and to not have drink [liquor]. Something about her blood being fast." Madelaine replies, "I saw that woman go off to work the strip, I told her to rest, but she says, 'I got to go'." Madelaine shakes her head: "Not good to work when sick." Sara continues, "Virgil's back from Nassau. He's working his roof."

1:15, Peter Manley and Lucas Bennett have returned with the catch they promised. In Peter's right hand, dangling from a string of leaf, are several pieces of yellow-pink conch meat. From his left hand, the meat of three fresh fish--turbot, rock, and the arm-long grouper fish--are hanging. Walking slightly behind him is Lucas, carrying the fishing gear. Peter hangs the conch from a nearby tree limb and suspends two of the three fish from a rafter inside his family's kitchen hut. Giving the third fish--a turbot--to Lucas, he says, "Give this to your daddy like he asked us." Lucas waves goodbye and heads towards his house. Peter goes into his house to shower. The water is cold and salty.

1:40, and up the road walk Bethena and Amos Manley. Each balances a thirty-pound bundle of wood on his head. Five yards ahead of Amos walks the horse, Tamarind, restrained by a long rope held in Amos' right hand. As they walk towards their house, they wave up to Virgil, who sits resting atop his new roof. Amos, feeling happy, begins to sing a few verses of "Nassau Down By The Sea." His mother joins in, softly humming. Reaching the kitchen hut they drop their loads and then unfasten the saddlebags on Tamarind. Each is filled to the brim with cobs of corn. Peter comes out to greet them, showing off his catch. Amos walks Tamarind back over to the Whateley's. By the time he returns to the kitchen hut, the smells of supper are filling the yard. Bethena has put some vegetables in a pot to steep over the fire. The rest of the meal will be cooked by Becky when she returns from school.



2:15 p.m., Amos and Bethena are dumping the baskets of corn onto the floor of the kitchen hut, forming a huge mound of cobs. Seated on the ground, they begin to husk and separate the good corn from the bad. They will use the bad cobs for feeding the animals.

By 3 p.m., little Esther Manley and her friend are home from school. The two girls decide they want to feed the chickens. They begin picking the kernels from the cob and tossing them at the birds. The tossing motions turn to giggling and throwing gestures. "Esther!" her mother yells from within the hut, "Don't you feed those critters now!" Esther, ignoring her mother's reprimand, continues; then, growing weary, she hurls the remaining cobs at a nearby hen. The startled bird squawks and flutters from the throw.

3:15, and around the bend walk Constance Bennett, Doris Burton, and Corina Rackham. They have completed their day's work on the airstrip and are each returning to their homes to prepare supper. Protruding from beneath the brim of Doris' hat are slips of green leaves. They are saab leaves and Doris has applied them to her head as a bush medicine. Her head had been bothering her all day and saab is known to take away headaches. As Corina walks along the rocky path to her house, she passes Lucille Bennett. Lucille calls her over as she continues to plait, and the two women converse. Corina speaks in a rhythm, punctuated by puffs from her pipe.

Over at the Dempsters, Sara says goodbye to her aunt, Madelaine Manley. The two women will soon begin lighting their fires to prepare for supper. This afternoon Sara will be cooking stewed tomatoes and rice mixed with peas. Randolph Dempster has come home from school and he and his sister, Joyce, begin playing with their dog. They chase it about the yard, and then Joyce strokes the pup's back while Randolph allows the dog to nibble on his fingers. Occasionally, the two children pull or yank the dog's tail. This teasing becomes more frequent, and they soon begin pulling its ears for fun. Sara calls Joyce into the hut to watch her cook the meal. The girl asks if she can help. Sara tells Joyce: "You too young for that child, too young. You gotty wait till ya's six years old before you can learn yourself to cook."

3:40 p.m., and Mr. Dempster walks into the yard. His back is bent, and his steps are slow. Mrs. Dempster sees his troubled walk and calls out. "What's wrong with you man. I knews you was late from no good." Edward explains to his wife that his back gave out: "It's got me aching." Sara, concerned, says: "Sit down man and rest yourself, be still with it, then it won't hurt ya none." He slowly seats himself on a nearby rock, wincing with discomfort. Randolph and Joyce stop their playing and gather around him. Edward rests his large worn hands around each of their shoulders. "How've you children behaved today?" They nod and say, "Good daddy." They ask him if they can go for water with him. "Not today childs. My back is not so good, ya see, and I asked one of the Manley boys to bring us some. But I want yous to learn, it's about time, so we'll go tomorrow.



That is if I's feeling better. Whys don't yous go and play." He pats each on the rear, and the two children return to a miniature house they've been building in a nearby thicket.

They are playing house. Joyce cradles a doll that she and her grandmother made last week. Randolph is thatching silvertop in the shape of a tiny roof. Joyce puts down the doll and begins to prepare supper: no food or drink is seen but Randolph eats heartily. Sara is telling Edward that it is not his place to think of going for well water; "that's woman's work!" Edward softly explains that he cares none for what the other men think, there's no reason why he can't go to the well. Despite his wife's hesitations, he is adamant, and no more is said.

4:15, and through the center of town walk Daniel Burton, aged 20, and Preston Boatwright, 26. Preston has been trying to fix his car all day, but he needs a piston valve and does not have one. Maybe Peter Manley will have it. They meet Peter outside his house. He is throwing rocks at a trespassing rooster with great accuracy. Daniel joins in trying to corner the rooster. Preston describes the needed part to Peter. The three leave the frantic rooster, laughing mockingly at its laziness. Peter tells them that they might find the missing valve in one of his old abandoned cars. He indicates "the silver Buick in the bushes." They open the rusty hood and after five minutes of searching, Preston pulls the valve out. "This is it!" he says, "you want to come help?" Peter says, "Sure, that old rooster can wait."

The three walk down the road towards the Buccaneer Club where a green car waits to be fixed. Along the way they pass Jonathon, Paul, and Amos. The three boys are jumping over a homemade highbar. Looking like a miniature goalpost, with the crossbar balanced on nails, the hurtle is being jumped over at its lowest height. In succession the boys run the ten yards then leap over the low bar. All succeed. Jonathon raises it up two notches; this time the bar is three feet off the ground. Paul hesitates before his jump. Laughing, the other two boys shout for him to "go and try." Finally he makes a sprint, then leaps; but just as he passes over the bar, his back foot catches it, causing the bar to fall off its nails and onto the ground below. Screaming with laughter at his own foul, Paul tells Amos it's his turn now. Amos tries but also fails. The laughter continues. Jonathon--the tallest of the three--runs, leaps, and touches the ground without disturbing the bar. The others yell and clap upon his success.

4:45, the Whateley's house is busy. All eleven children are home from school or the field. Two of the youngest children, Joanna and Harmon, sit over a pile of limestone rocks. They had spent yesterday breaking the large white stones into palm-size pieces. With a hammer, the two continue to break them down. To do this they rest a rock on a large slab of stone and pound upon it with their hammers. It is more of a game now than work. Supper will soon be ready, so they are just passing the time. They will spend most of their time Saturday breaking rocks to increase the size of the piles. Within the month, government trucks will come around and collect the piles



to mix them into cement for construction. They will pay the people 25¢ per bucket.

Enoch Whateley calls up to his brother Virgil to see if he can help on the roof. Virgil says yes and shows him what little there is left to do. Tomorrow he will need some help on the inside. Enoch says he'll stay home to help.

5 p.m., and Mr. Samuel Whateley has finished the repairs on the hut. He now sits on a bench, smoking his pipe and flipping through pictures in a magazine. His grandchild Matilda is crouched between his knees. Supper is almost ready. Helen and her sister Mary have been cooking for the last three hours. Alberta now sits under the shade of a tree where she spent the afternoon washing beer bottles. The bottles will be used tomorrow to store tomato paste. The procedure of bottle washing is leisurely but quite time consuming. To clean them, Alberta first soaks the bottles in a basin of salt water. Then, after vigorously shaking a single bottle filled with water, she dumps half the liquid out. Next in place of a scrub brush, she inserts several long strips of prickly-top leaves. She then begins to scrape them against the glass walls. The leaves are long enough to clean the bottom of the bottle well. Since the bottles have been used before, the crusted tomato paste washes away slowly. If a bottle is scraped and remains dirty, Alberta might insert a synthetic kitchen brush, which usually finishes off the job. Finally, she submerges and empties the bottles, setting each one carefully into a wooden tray partitioned to hold soda bottles. Tomorrow, after filling about a hundred of these bottles with the red paste, they will be stored in a hut. They can be kept this way for several years.

5:15, and Enoch Whateley knows to go to the well for supper water. Corina Rackham and Lucille Bennett's boys, James and Paul, call out for Enoch to wait. They each carry an empty bucket on their heads. The three boys join up and walk down the road that leads from the town to the well. Four minutes later, Kenneth and William Burton are seen walking behind them. Kenneth asks William to stop. He takes off his sandals and places them in the bush. Then, as if a common habit, he breaks off a leafy branch and drops it onto the road. It points towards his hidden sandals, to remind him of their location on his return. Kenneth--now barefoot--and William walk on in the direction of the well. Within twenty minutes, Enoch, James, and Paul return, their necks feeling the weight of the now full buckets. As they enter town, they pass Becky Manley and her sister Susan, who have just started off towards the well.

5:25, and the fragrant smells of fish and cooked cabbage waft from the various huts into the village. The busy workday is fading into the quiet aura of evening light. Water is still being carried home, mostly by the children. With crowns of buckets, they form a sort of procession that passes to and from the well.

By the time the sun has set, almost everyone has eaten their dinner. The bright glare and noise of the day is replaced by the warm, yellow glow

to mix them into cement for construction. They will pay the people 25¢ per bucket.

Enoch Whateley calls up to his brother Virgil to see if he can help on the roof. Virgil says yes and shows him what little there is left to do. Tomorrow he will need some help on the inside. Enoch says he'll stay home to help.

5 p.m., and Mr. Samuel Whateley has finished the repairs on the hut. He now sits on a bench, smoking his pipe and flipping through pictures in a magazine. His grandchild Matilda is crouched between his knees. Supper is almost ready. Helen and her sister Mary have been cooking for the last three hours. Alberta now sits under the shade of a tree where she spent the afternoon washing beer bottles. The bottles will be used tomorrow to store tomato paste. The procedure of bottle washing is leisurely but quite time consuming. To clean them, Alberta first soaks the bottles in a basin of salt water. Then, after vigorously shaking a single bottle filled with water, she dumps half the liquid out. Next in place of a scrub brush, she inserts several long strips of prickly-top leaves. She then begins to scrape them against the glass walls. The leaves are long enough to clean the bottom of the bottle well. Since the bottles have been used before, the crusted tomato paste washes away slowly. If a bottle is scraped and remains dirty, Alberta might insert a synthetic kitchen brush, which usually finishes off the job. Finally, she submerges and empties the bottles, setting each one carefully into a wooden tray partitioned to hold soda bottles. Tomorrow, after filling about a hundred of these bottles with the red paste, they will be stored in a hut. They can be kept this way for several years.

5:15, and Enoch Whateley knows to go to the well for supper water. Corina Rackham and Lucille Bennett's boys, James and Paul, call out for Enoch to wait. They each carry an empty bucket on their heads. The three boys join up and walk down the road that leads from the town to the well. Four minutes later, Kenneth and William Burton are seen walking behind them. Kenneth asks William to stop. He takes off his sandals and places them in the bush. Then, as if a common habit, he breaks off a leafy branch and drops it onto the road. It points towards his hidden sandals, to remind him of their location on his return. Kenneth--now barefoot--and William walk on in the direction of the well. Within twenty minutes, Enoch, James, and Paul return, their necks feeling the weight of the now full buckets. As they enter town, they pass Becky Manley and her sister Susan, who have just started off towards the well.

5:25, and the fragrant smells of fish and cooked cabbage waft from the various huts into the village. The busy workday is fading into the quiet aura of evening light. Water is still being carried home, mostly by the children. With crowns of buckets, they form a sort of procession that passes to and from the well.

By the time the sun has set, almost everyone has eaten their dinner. The bright glare and noise of the day is replaced by the warm, yellow glow

of lamplight and soft voices. By 8 o'clock the town sits in silence. The younger children have gone to sleep. The older children sit about the house. Some read; the women plait or rest. Some men walk over to the Buccaneer Club for drinks, conversation, and dominoes. An old Buick pulls up to the Butler's house. Virgil goes out to meet his friends, Andrew and Peter. They drive off to Thrasher Creek where they will have a few drinks and shoot some pool.

9 p.m., and inside Bramley it is a time for sitting and sleeping, for visiting, or receiving guests. Over at the Dempsters, their dog, "Shut Up," is barking loudly. Mr. Louis Timmons and his wife have come to visit. Sara greets them at the door: "Come in man, come right on in." The three sit on wooden chairs inside the main room. The Timmonses tell Sara about their dog and how it got hit by a car yesterday. "Had nice eyes," whispers Louis. "Such a terrible shame," reflects Sara. They all nod in silence. The quiet is broken by the sound of Edward, calling out from the bedroom, "Who's there, Sara?" His wife tells him it's the Timmonses. "They've come to pay us a visit." "Evening!" calls out Edward. Sara turns to Louis and his wife, Thea, and explains to them that her husband's back is giving him pain. "I'll be putting some warm towels on him later, to ease it some."

Louis shakes his head in sympathy and tells a story of when his back gave out. "It was so bad that I had to see one of those doctors in Nassau. He fixed me though; they're better equipped. You know, it'll do your husband good if he sees one of them doctors like I did."

Mrs. Dempster boils some coffee and after bringing a cup in to Edward, the other three drink and talk quietly for the next half hour.

Louis gets up and says they had better be getting back home. Mrs. Dempster tells them how nice it was to have them in her home and what a blessing it is to be able to share their good hearts with one another. They agree and quietly say goodbye to Mr. Dempster from the next room. They tell him to rest up and to take care. Louis and Thea exchange farewell blessings with Sara and then leave. Mrs. Dempster leans out into the dark night, listening for the reassuring sound of the van's motor as it drives away. Once inside again, she tells her husband that it's time for the warm towels to be pressed on his back. She leaves the house and quickly returns with a bucket of sea water. She pours this into a pot and places it on the gas stove to heat. Within ten minutes she is soaking the towels in the hot water. Next, she wrings them out and brings them into the next room. Hearing her enter, the two children that have been sleeping beside Edward roll about, then fall again into a still slumber. Mr. Dempster groans softly as the heated cloths are applied by his wife. "Too hot woman, too hot," moans Edward as he shrugs the scorching towel off. After letting them cool for a few minutes, Sara gently reapplies the towels. Mr. Dempster smiles with the warming sensations.

10:30 and the lamps are blown out. The Dempsters have gone to sleep. In the other homes, except for a few men and some of the older boys who no longer attend school, the people have long gone to bed. Coming back in around midnight, the men will sleep until around six or seven a.m., awakening with the rest of their families.

By 9 a.m., they will be out in the sea diving or working on some small construction job in the next town. By afternoon, they will be stopping by the Buccaneer for a bottle of rum and another game of dominoes. In the evening there will be chores to do around the home before supper. Saturday night is the dance, and the Buccaneer will be "rockin' on the high seas." Sunday, when a local church service is held by the Reverend Manley, the congregation will be composed of many of the young children and a few of their parents.

For the people of Bramley, many of whom have been to the outside world and found it wanting, life at its best is simple and easy-going. The work is hard but valued. The people are not without their hardships and pains, but the village is a peaceful one. "We do our chores, then rest. We raise our children to be good Christians, and know they will care for us in our old age. We teach them how we was taught, the right way. But times are changing, the kids today think different. Some are going off to Nassau to find work. But they'll be back to raise a family, just like we done raise them. And soon, when the farming is industrious, they won't ever have to leave. . . ."

Notes

1. The quotes and visual descriptions in this essay are taken from both field notes and memory. In either case, they are representative of the people and their interactions. "A Day In The Life of Bramley" was written to provide the reader with both intimate and tangible knowledge. It concerns the ways of life that characterize the people of Bramley and other communities on Cat Island. Although based primarily on observation in Bramley, I feel that the data on household chores are probably applicable to people in neighboring settlements as well.

In lieu of a specific day in Bramley, the paper is in actuality a composite of my experiences and interactions within that community over a period of several weeks. These have been combined to provide a narrative account of what a typical day in that community is like. Since the format necessarily relies on a condensation of the time dimension, the reader should be aware that, for the purposes of narrative economy, I have also occasionally condensed the activities of several people into the actions of one individual.